

Priority Areas Zoom Briefing



Zoom: What is it?

It is a video calling platform similar to others you may have used – Skype MS Teams etc. It can be used for video calls or audio only. It works on most smartphones, tablets, Windows PCs, Macs. People can also call into it from their phone.

What could I use it for?

You can use it for one to one calls, you can use it with small or large groups (up to 100). So you can keep in touch with friends and family, you can use it for coaching, pastoral supervision or other such meetings. You can conduct meetings for work, prayer meetings, Bible studies, webinars, training, committee meetings, and social activities. A lot of things you are used to doing in person will work on zoom. You just have to try them out and manage the activities.

What advantages does it have over other platforms?

- Zoom is very stable and consistently offers very high quality of calls.
- The people you call do not have to have an account.
- Anyone with an email address/ mobile number and a suitable device can participate in video.
- There is a free version that everyone has access to for making calls.
- There are some great built in features to do with screen sharing & breakout rooms
- It is really easy to use.

What are the limitations?

There are some limitations to the free version. You have unlimited time on calls with one other person. As soon as there are three of you time is limited to 40 mins. It is also limited by your access to the internet, and the quality of your equipment. If you have an ancient laptop and a dialup connection then it will not function as well as it does on a reasonably new tablet or smartphone connected to fast wifi.

How do I get it?

From a PC start from your browser and go to zoom.us – you can start a call from your browser. You'll need to create an account to use it – and decide if you want the free or paid version. The entry level paid version is not a massive expense and will remove the time limit from calls with more than two people. Once you have signed up there is usually a short download before the call starts. From inside the call you can invite people to join you. They will receive an email containing a link, which will start the download and open the call.

From a smartphone, tablet or Mac go to your app store and download 'Zoom Cloud Meetings' then set up your account, and open a call.

Do you have any tips for using it?

Practice with it before you want to use it for anything important. Call friends, family, colleagues, get to know how to make a call and how to end it. Saves for embarrassment in a more formal situation. It is especially important to practise ahead of time if you want to use any of the special features for the

first time. (voting polls, the chat box, raising hands, screen sharing or breakout rooms). They are simple to use and they work without too much head scratching, however you want to be so confident using them that you don't lose the thread when you are in front of all the people on your call.

If you are using a smartphone or tablet – find a way of holding it in position prior to the call starting. You don't want to give folks motion sickness as you wave your device around. Some tablet cases allow you to prop the tablet up, phones can be balanced between the keyboard and screen of a laptop. (And will always slide down the side of a coffee cup – so don't rely on that.) Also frame yourself properly in the screen. It is really disconcerting to spend 20 minutes talking to a forehead or someone's elbow.

If you have more than 3 or 4 people on the call it is good etiquette to mute all the mics, and only unmute the person who is speaking. Gets rid of a lot of background noise and also avoids embarrassment when the kids wander into a meeting or the washing machine goes into a spin cycle.

Again make sure you are in a space with good connection well before you are due to go online. If you cut it too fine and have connection issues you'll end up being late for your own meeting!

Make full use of the scheduling facility – this means that participants can do the download of the programme ahead of time if it is their first go, and experiment with their own connection – saves a lot of faffing about before you're actually on the call. If it's a really important call – or you are working with a co-host you may want to do a dry run before. If you have less tech experienced people who you want to be involved, give them the opportunity of a dry run too – so they are not the focus of attention if they can't get online or can't hear properly etc.

One of the useful functions to allow discussion if you have a large group is breakout rooms, where you can split people into small groups. If you are using this it's a good idea to have the groups organised prior to the call.

If you are planning to screenshare, take a few minutes to check you have closed anything confidential or personal!

If you are running a call with a large group of people it is a good idea to have someone dedicated to running the tech side of the call. They can manage who is on the screen, pay attention to the chat box and who has raised their hand, sort people onto breakout rooms, activate the screen sharing at the appropriate moment, and this will leave you head space to run the call. Imagine trying to moderate a kirk session online as well as dealing with the technical side of the call?! Having this kind of help makes the experience much slicker for those taking part.

There is a community of practice developing around using Zoom for worship with videos and discussion at <https://reyes-chow.com/zoom-worship-laboratory/> and you can check out the tutorial videos on the zoom.us site.

Have fun with it, and think about how it can save everyone time and money. Now is the time to experiment!

Safeguarding and Security

There are several issues to consider around safeguarding and security and the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Team and Data Protection Officer have produced guides to help with this. These can be

found on the Church of Scotland website (<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice>)

Further Guidance

If you need help with any of the features mentioned above, Zoom's own support site offers lots of articles

and videos to walk you through these features and much more (<https://support.zoom.us>)

Those of us in the Priority Areas team who have experience of using Zoom (Iain, John and Naomi) are happy to offer support and guidance. There is no such thing as a silly question and we can offer one-to-one support. You can get in touch with us by email (priorityareas@churchofscotland.org.uk).

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